



About Us

Issues

Billboards & Sign Control

Resources

Bookstore

Search

MAY 2007

TELL A FRIEND:

Help spread the word about Scenic Overlook.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Newspaper column exposes underbelly of outdoor advertising...

California's landscapes at stake in two proposed law changes...

Good news and bad news on the tree-cutting front...

Change in leadership coming at

Citizens for a Scenic

Wisconsin...

Comedy Corner: Bill Maher's

new rules on digital billboards...

TAKE ACTION:

Visit the [Scenic America Action Center](#) today.

DONATE:

Support [Scenic America's](#) efforts to keep America beautiful.

IN THE NEWS:

A towering issue...

Vancouver mayor tries to block electronic billboards...

Scenic Hudson hands over 334 acres...

Valley growth fuels farmers' land use concerns...

Floating ideas on eco-tourism and land conservation...

NEWSPAPER COLUMN EXPOSES UNDERBELLY OF OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

Renowned nationally-syndicated columnist Neal Peirce has just penned [this column](#), which draws attention to several of the hazards and hypocrisies posed by the outdoor advertising industry and their increasingly brash approach to reaching consumers via the public realm.



Scenic America President Kevin Fry was interviewed extensively for the piece, which was published in over 50 newspapers around the country.

Among the many issues Peirce raises surrounding outdoor advertising is one that has received attention before now, and that is the environmental impact of the emerging generation of Peirce notes that the industry claims the boards are energy-efficient but in fact they use some 4,800 watts of electricity per square yard per hour.

A recurring theme of the column is the forced incursion of commercialism into the public sphere. With most people working hard to keep advertising out of their personal lives, the outdoor environment is quickly becoming one of the last avenues through which advertisers can pitch their messages to consumers. Consequently, they are becoming more aggressive in their tactics.

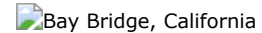
In particular, many of our most precious and historic urban areas are being assaulted with a barrage of garish and offensive advertising designed so that it can't be ignored. A recent proposal by Philadelphia's public transportation agency seeks to wrap two stories of its downtown headquarters in advertising. The agency says it wants the advertising revenue in lieu of further fare increases on commuters, though they have not sought public opinion on the idea.

Philadelphia-based [SCRUB](#), a Scenic America affiliate, is fighting the proposal. You can read more about the fight in [this article](#) from *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, which features interviews with both Kevin Fry and SCRUB President Mary Tracy. The proposal is set to go before the zoning board on June 13.

CALIFORNIA'S LANDSCAPES AT STAKE IN TWO PROPOSED LAW CHANGES

Two bills currently before the California legislature could have vastly different impacts on the future of that state's roadways, landscapes and vistas.

[Senate Bill 563](#) would prevent companies from erecting illegal signs with the intent of flying under the radar for five years, after which they are protected by a de facto statute-of-limitations law called rebuttable presumption. California's sign code enforcement offices are notoriously understaffed and therefore it is not unusual for a sign to escape legal scrutiny for five years.

At the other end of the spectrum, [AB 830](#), a bill which has just passed through  the California Assembly (lower house of the state legislature), would allow outdoor advertising companies to transform their old wooden billboards into illuminated electronic billboards. The bill, sponsored by Assemblywoman Fiona Ma of San Francisco, would have a profound long-term impact on the safety and aesthetic quality of California's roadways. Scenic America is working with local allies to oppose this bill as it is considered by the Senate.

Assemblywoman Ma needn't go far to see for herself what kind of impact electronic billboards can have on drivers and area residents. An electronic billboard owned by CBS Outdoor has been [blinding drivers](#) on the Bay Bridge between San Francisco and Oakland. The sign is illuminating the night sky for miles around and was even [mistaken](#)

Get Local



Straban township to support 'Journey Through Hallowed Ground'...

Cell tower foes set to fight in New Jersey...

Billboard owners given 30 days to modify sign in the Delaware Water Gap...

Cell tower controversy near Civil War landmark in Tennessee...

Owner of small billboard company plans to sell, not rent, boards to advertisers...

QUESTIONS/FEEDBACK:

Do you have questions about Scenic America or story suggestions for Scenic Overlook? Send an email to: ashburn@scenic.org.

SCENIC AMERICA

1634 I Street NW, Suite 510
Washington, DC 20006
Phone (202) 638-0550
Fax (202) 638-3171
scenic@scenic.org

for a fire by a pilot. Public reaction to the sign, as witnessed by [this local blog](#), has been near-universal condemnation.

GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS ON THE TREE-CUTTING FRONT Tree-cutting around billboards continues to be an issue all around the country. This spring there was legislation before the Georgia House of Representatives which would have greatly expanded the ability of the billboard industry to cut trees near their signs. The legislation, HB 610, was withdrawn by the House thanks in large part to pressure from the [Garden Club of Georgia](#). Scenic America assisted the effort by submitting comments to the Georgia Legislature as well as providing them with copies of our tree-cutting publication, *Beauty and the Beast*. If you'd like to receive a copy of this publication or learn more about this deplorable industry practice, visit the [tree-cutting issue area](#) of our website.



Back in 2005, trees and shrubs [were illegally destroyed](#) on the right of way near a billboard along Interstate 71 in Kentucky. Despite a reward offered by [Scenic Kentucky](#), the perpetrators of this crime have not been caught.


This stretch of roadway remained blemished until just recently, when a group of concerned citizens took it upon themselves to plant new growth in the area.

The group included Keith Eiken, executive director of Scenic Kentucky, who said "It looks great...it has been an example of how citizens can come together to improve Kentucky's natural beauty on the highways."

The group planted a collection of donated plants and shrubs, including quince, red twigs and forsythia, like that seen in the photo to the left.

The news is not all good though, as it is likely that a tree-cutting bill will resurface in the Georgia House before too long. Additionally, there are reports of new illegal tree-cutting activity taking place in North Carolina. You can read about it [here](#) and [here](#), and Scenic America will be keeping tabs on further developments on this story.


CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP COMING AT CITIZENS FOR A SCENIC WISCONSIN

It has been announced that Chuck Mitchell will be stepping down as Executive  Director of [Citizens for a Scenic Wisconsin](#) in June. Chuck's decision to retire from his leadership position is fueled by his desire to spend more time traveling outside the country and catching up on long-planned home renovations. Chuck was integral to the creation of Citizens for a Scenic Wisconsin seven years ago, and he plans to remain an active member of the board.

Scenic America extends our congratulations and thanks to Chuck for all his hard work and many accomplishments as Executive Director of Citizens for a Scenic Wisconsin.

Taking over the role of Executive Director will be fellow board member Charley Weeth. The Scenic America family looks forward to working with Charley and wishes him much success in his new position!

COMEDY CORNER: BILL MAHER'S NEW RULES ON DIGITAL BILLBOARDS

 A bit of comedy (of the funny because it's true variety) to finish off this month's Scenic Overlook.

Click on the image to the left, a new window will open and you'll be able to play the video on that page.

Scenic America wishes everyone a happy, safe, and scenic Memorial Day weekend and a pleasant start to the summer season.

While you're out and about, take a few photos of the good, bad and ugly and [send them](#) our way for inclusion in our revised Scenic Scrapbook, coming soon!

Change is inevitable. Ugliness is not.

